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More on the Effects of Divisive Primaries*

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There seems to be a widespread belief among political commentators and political analysts that primary elections, particularly those that divide the party at either the organizational or electoral level, undermine the capacity of the party to wage an effective general election campaign. They reason that party activists, as well as rank and file voters, who prefer a candidate that loses a hard fought primary will be less willing to work, campaign, and vote for the party's candidate in the general election. Indeed, hard fought contests may even drive the loser's supporters to the opposition. It seems plausible that those who support a loser in the primary might be somewhat less motivated in the November campaign than if their candidate had won. Conversely, those who support a winner may be more enthusiastic. While there is a great deal of supposition and impression regarding the negative effects of divisive primaries on party and candidate electoral fortunes, there is still relatively little in the way of systematic evidence to support the argument. Using the county as a unit of analysis, this paper examines the impact of primary divisiveness at the electoral level on a measure of general election performance in the 1970 elections for governor and U. S. Senate in Ohio. It also examines the impact on election performance of support for winning and losing primary candidates among county party chairmen. Thus, the analysis combines an examination of two components of party divisiveness in primary elections, the electoral and organizational.

Relevant Literature

The divisive effects of primary elections on party organization is a recurrent theme in the literature on political parties. V. O. Key writes, for example, that the adoption of the direct primary opened the way for disruptive forces that gradually fractionalized the party organization. The primary, Key suggests, permitted direct appeals by politicians to party members and rank and file which generated factions and cliques attached to individual candidates.¹ Frank Sorauf echoes these feelings.

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¹ V. O. Key, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (5th ed., New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1964), p. 342.

He notes that primaries pit party worker against party worker, party group against party group, resulting in deep wounds slow to heal. He suggests that the cost to the health and strength of the party is considerable.² Add to these comments the impressions of political commentators, and the evidence for the debilitating effects of primary elections on political parties is compelling.³

However, Andrew Hacker concludes that a divisive primary is little more likely than a non divisive primary to influence a candidate's election chances. Using aggregate election data, Hacker analyzed 220 elections for governor and U. S. senator for the period 1956 to 1964. Defining a divisive primary as one where the winner received less than 65 percent of the vote, he finds other factors more significant than the nature of the primary to general election success. Incumbency, the competitive position of the parties, the office contested, and turnout are associated with winning. With these factors controlled, he concludes there is no difference in success between those with divisive primaries and those without.⁴ Bernstein, however, has replicated a portion of Hacker's analysis and observes the opposite. Noting that Hacker misinterpreted his findings, Bernstein concludes divisive primaries do indeed lessen a candidate's chances in the general election, and this is true with both the effects of incumbency and party competition controlled. Examining 293 elections for the U. S. Senate between 1956 and 1972, he finds incumbents less likely to win re-election when they won nomination by less than 20 percent of the vote. In competitive situations, he observes that the harmful effects of a divisive primary are even more pronounced, incumbents rarely winning when their primary victory is close and rarely losing when it is the opposition primary that is close.⁵

In a somewhat more narrowly based study, Clem and Meier note only a slight correlation between a divisive primary and general election success. Examining elections for governor, U. S. senator, and U. S. representative from 1946 to 1974 in South Dakota, they observe that contested primaries on occasion lead to greater general election margins than expected. They comment that contested primaries may add to a candidate's visibility, particularly for the out-party, and as a result,

² Frank J. Sorauf, *Party Politics in America* (4th ed., Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), p. 213.

³ *The Making of the President, 1960*, quoted in Frank J. Sorauf, *Party Politics in America* (4th ed., Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), p. 213.

⁴ Andrew Hacker, "Does a Divisive Primary Harm a Candidate's Election Chances?" *American Political Science Review*, 59 (1965), 105-110.

⁵ Robert A. Bernstein, "Divisive Primaries Do Hurt: U. S. Senate Races, 1956-1972," *American Political Science Review*, 71 (June, 1977), 540-545.

greater election success. In short, they conclude divisive primaries need not hurt a candidate's election chances, nor need non divisive primaries help.⁶ Studies such as these are, however, somewhat limited in that they only treat aggregate election data. Frank Sorauf has pointed out, for example, that they do not rule out the possibility of a general harm to and weakening of the party organization.⁷

Johnson and Gibson address themselves in a way to Sorauf's point in a study of campaign workers in a congressional election in Iowa. The authors examined primary and general election activity among Republican and Democratic activists who supported and worked for opposing primary candidates. Their concern was the impact of winning and losing on motivation. Do those who support a primary loser move from the defeated candidate to the victor, or do they withdraw from political activity? Or what effects, if any, are produced by a divisive primary? Are the effects permanent or are they temporary?

The authors conclude that a divisive primary depletes the number of persons available to work for the organization in the general election and that the party organization is splintered. One-half of the campaign workers reported being more active in the primary than the general election. Three-fourths of those who supported a loser were less active, while only one-fourth of those who supported a winner reported less activity. Better than 12 percent of the campaign workers indicated that they were going to vote for the opposition party in November. Another 5 to 7 percent were undecided or responded that they would vote for neither candidate. Of those who supported primary losers, 44 percent said they would vote for the candidate who had defeated their primary preference, but they would not work for him. Six percent said they would vote for neither candidate, and 20 percent indicated that they would work for the other party. In general, the evidence suggests that a divisive primary limits the effectiveness of the party by reducing the number of campaign workers and voter support in the general election. The effects appear, however, to be temporary. There were no differences between winners and losers in response to future political activity and to serving a more responsible position in the party.⁸

⁶ Alan L. Clem and Kenneth J. Meier, "Another Look at the Effects of Divisive Party Primaries: The South Dakota Experience, 1964-1974," *Public Affairs* (Vermillion, South Dakota: Governmental Research Bureau, University of South Dakota, 1975), pp. 1-4.

⁷ Sorauf, *Party Politics*, n. 7, p. 218.

⁸ Donald B. Johnson and James R. Gibson, "The Divisive Primary Revisited: Party Activists in Iowa," *American Political Science Review*, 68 (March, 1974), 67-77.

The findings of Johnson and Gibson may reflect in part the nature of the organizations they examine. They asked the candidates to supply the names of persons active in their campaigns. Their analysis treats, as a result, the effects of a divisive primary on candidate organization.⁹ There may be little reason to expect a divisive primary to have similar effects on the regular party organization. Candidate organizations are committed to the candidates; regulars may be committed to the party itself. Activities and concerns of the regular organization may transcend individual candidacies. Candidates come and go, but the organization remains. Regulars may avoid any activity that jeopardizes or compromises the organization. Moreover, it seems that expectations associated with official positions in the party would demand a concerted effort on behalf of the party's candidates regardless of personal inclinations. Consistent with this, Comer observes little difference between levels of general election support among party leaders who supported winners and losers in a highly divisive primary election.¹⁰ It may be that regular organizational activists are uninfluenced by or rise above divisive primaries.

None of the above studies deal with the impact of divisive primaries on general election success in terms of the number of votes a candidate receives. Highly contested primaries may make a difference in terms of a candidate's share of the general election vote but only rarely alter the outcome. Pierson and Smith address themselves to this possibility by examining all major party gubernatorial primaries from 1903 to 1968 in all but eleven southern states. Treating divisiveness as an interval measure (the winners percentage of the total vote for the two highest vote getters), the authors conclude that the relationship between primary divisiveness and general election vote is almost non-existent. In both the Republican and Democratic party, divisiveness accounted for less than one percent of the variance in general election vote and the direction of relationships were opposite of expectations. That is, divisiveness added to a candidate's share of the general election vote. These patterns remained with both incumbency and party competition controlled.¹¹

The research here continues this line of inquiry by examining the relationship between the percentage of the primary election vote at the county level for the winner of the primary state-wide, hereafter referred to as primary divisiveness, and the percentage of the party's vote

⁹ This is revealed in the fact that 61 percent of the Johnson and Gibson group did not hold a party office at the time, and 48 percent had never held a party office.

¹⁰ John Comer, "Another Look at the Effects of the Divisive Primary," *American Politics Quarterly*, 4 (January, 1976), 121-218.

¹¹ James E. Pierson and T. Smith, "Primary Divisiveness and General Election Success: A Re-examination," *Journal of Politics*, 37 (May, 1975), 555-562.

in the general election. Like Pierson and Smith, it treats primary divisiveness as an interval measure and relates divisiveness to candidate shares of the general election vote. However, it also examines the manner in which the preferences and activities of party leaders influence the general election vote. Thus, it focuses on a dimension of the thesis heretofore ignored, the comparative influence of organizational and electoral divisions in the primary election. Key and Sorauf were concerned primarily with the organizational consequences of divisive primaries. Hacker and others treat divisions among the rank and file.

The Primary Elections in 1970

The primary elections in Ohio in 1970 for governor and U. S. Senate provide an appropriate context for testing the divisive primary thesis. At the rank and file level, both parties were seriously divided over their nomination for governor and U. S. Senate. There were no incumbents running for re-election and all the candidates were well-known. The Republican gubernatorial primary found Roger Cloud contesting Donald Lukens and Paul Brown for the nomination. Cloud served several terms as state auditor and was for several years a dominant and powerful leader in the state legislature. Lukens, a congressman from southwestern Ohio, was a young and articulate spokesman for conservatism among Ohio Republicans. Brown was attorney general of the state. Cloud won nomination with 51 percent of the vote. In the Democratic Party, John Gilligan contested somewhat lesser known Democrats, Mark EcElroy and Robert Seeney. Gilligan had served a term in Congress and had been the party's nominee for U. S. Senate in 1968. Gilligan, a liberal, was not too popular with some conservative Democrats in the state, but it was widely recognized that he had the best chance of winning the governorship. Sweeney had served several terms in Congress. Gilligan won the primary with 60 percent of the vote.

The Senate primary in the Republican Party found James Rhodes, a two term incumbent governor, contesting an incumbent congressman, Robert Taft, Jr. Before serving two terms as governor, Rhodes served as state auditor, and before that, as mayor of Columbus. Taft was serving his third term in Congress, and had run for the Senate once before. Taft beat Rhodes with slightly less than 51 percent of the vote. The Democratic Party found nationally known John Glenn, contesting a highly expert long-time Democratic Party politician, Howard Metzenbaum. Glenn achieved fame as an astronaut. Metzenbaum served as campaign manager for retiring Senator Steven Young in Young's previous Senate campaigns. Metzenbaum was also active in Democratic Party politics in Cuyahoga (Cleveland) County. Metzenbaum won the primary

with 46 percent of the vote. Less than 2 percent of the total vote separated the two candidates in what was a four man race.¹² In the general election, Taft defeated Metzenbaum by 70,000 votes and Gilligan defeated Cloud by 350,000.

The party was likewise divided at the organizational level. As an indication, consider that 12 percent of the county chairmen in the Democratic Party preferred a loser in the party's gubernatorial primary and 62 percent preferred the loser in the Senate primary. Twenty-six percent of the Republican chairmen preferred a loser in their party's gubernatorial primary and 80 percent preferred the loser in the Senate primary.¹³ While party chairmen are only one element of the local organization, they are an important element. They have considerable influence within the local organization and are often responsible for the party's campaign for state-wide offices within the counties. Any impact on the vote owing to the activity or inactivity of the party organization is likely to be revealed in the preferences and activities of the local county chairman.

Methodology

Primary divisiveness at the electoral level reflects the division of the vote among primary contestants. As the divisive primary thesis is developed in the literature, the concern is with the impact of supporting winners and losers in the primary election. Thus, primary divisiveness is defined as the percentage of the primary election vote at the county level received by the winner of the primary state-wide. The greater the nominee's percentage of the primary vote in the county, the less divisive the primary is considered to be. The smaller the percentage, the more divisive the primary is considered to be. The percentage for each county was subtracted from 100 so that higher values equal greater divisiveness. Data were taken from official primary election returns from each of Ohio's 88 counties for the gubernatorial and U. S. Senate primaries in May, 1970.¹⁴

¹² The Democratic Senate primary was a four man race, but two candidates were not considered serious contenders.

¹³ Other evidence of division is suggested by the 40 percent in the Democratic Party who endorsed a loser in their party's Senate primary and the 41 and 27 percent respectively in the Republican Party who endorsed losers in their party's Senate and gubernatorial primaries.

¹⁴ Selected distributional characteristics of primary divisiveness

	<i>Democratic Party</i>		<i>Republican Party</i>	
	<i>Gov.</i>	<i>Sen.</i>	<i>Gov.</i>	<i>Sen.</i>
Primary divisiveness				
Mean	59%	62%	56%	59%
Standard Deviation	7%	9%	11%	5%
Minimum	43%	50%	35%	51%
Maximum	74%	84%	82%	72%

To assess the impact of primary divisiveness on general election vote, one should have a measure that takes into consideration the usual electoral performance of the parties in general elections for each office within each county; i.e., an expected party vote for each office in each county, one that reflects the continuous overtime electoral strengths of the parties. An expected party vote was calculated for each office in each county by regressing each county's Republican percentage of the two party vote in the 1970 general election on the same percentage from three preceding general elections. For the governorship, these were 1958, 1962, and 1966, for the U. S. Senate, 1962, 1964, and 1968. Here too, data were official general election returns from each county for both major parties for the office of governor and U. S. Senate. The residual variation, each county's actual vote minus its expected vote, is a measure which reflects influences on the election other than the long-term partisan forces within each county.¹⁵

Support for winning and losing primary candidates among county chairmen was measured from responses to a mailed questionnaire.¹⁶ Following the general election, questionnaires were mailed to each chairman asking them which candidate they preferred in the primary, how strongly they preferred the candidate, and whether they endorsed and worked for the candidate. From these items, a number of simple

¹⁵ Selected distributional characteristics of each county's actual vote minus its expected vote (residual variation) by party and office:

	Gov.*	Sen.	Gov.	Sen.
Standard Deviation	.6%	.7%	.8%	.8%
Minimum	-2.5%	-1.1%	-2.0%	-5.7%
Maximum	1.5%	2.9%	3.8%	1.0%

* The mean is, of course, zero for each office.

¹⁶ Response rate was 77% (68) for Democratic chairmen and 65% (57) for Republican chairmen. A comparison of demographic and political characteristics of counties of chairmen responding with all counties suggests those responding are reasonably representative.

	Counties of Chairmen Responding	All Counties
Democratic Party		
Mean population density per square mile	371	465
Mean family income	10,049	10,162
Mean education among males	11.6	11.6
Mean percent Republican vote for governor in 1970	51	55
Mean percent Republican vote for senator in 1970	56	51
Republican party		
Mean population density per square mile	429	321
Mean family income	10,310	10,058
Mean education among males	13.1	12.6
Mean percent Republican vote for governor in 1970	51	55
Mean percent Republican vote for senator in 1970	54	50

scales were constructed. For example, chairmen were asked how strongly they favored their preferred candidate in their party's gubernatorial and senate primaries: very strongly, quite strongly, somewhat strongly, not strongly at all. Chairmen who preferred a loser in the primary and indicated a very strong preference were scored -4, quite strong -3, somewhat strong -2, and not strong at all -1. Chairmen who preferred the winner in the primary were scored 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The method was the same for having endorsed a candidate where there were three categories; public endorsement, private endorsement, and no endorsement; and having worked for a candidate where there were two; having worked and not having worked. Scores of each of these were also combined into a single cumulative scale.¹⁷ In the analysis that follows these scales as well as the measure of primary divisiveness outlined above are related to the measure reflecting differences between actual and expected party votes for the office of governor and U. S. Senate for each county.

Analysis

What then was the impact of the 1970 primaries in Ohio on the general election? The relationships between primary divisiveness and expected vote for each of the races are revealed in Table One. Contrary to expectations, in the Democratic Party both the gubernatorial and Senate nominee did better than expected in the general election in counties where their primary opponent ran well. The relationship is particularly strong for the gubernatorial primary. On the average, the Republican vote in the general election declined 2.5 percent with each increment in divisiveness. In the Senate primary, the relationship is weaker, registering a decline of 1.3 percent with each unit increase in divisiveness. The Republican Party is, however, another matter. Here,

¹⁷ Selected distributional characteristics of primary election support scales:

	<i>Democratic Party</i>		<i>Republican Party</i>	
	<i>Gov.</i>	<i>Sen.</i>	<i>Gov.</i>	<i>Sen.</i>
Primary preference				
Mean	3.2	-0.2	1.4	-1.3
Standard Deviation	1.8	3.0	2.8	2.4
Endorsed primary preference				
Mean	1.9	0.2	1.1	-0.6
Standard Deviation	1.3	1.8	1.6	1.6
Worked for primary preference				
Mean	1.4	0.1	0.9	-0.3
Standard Deviation	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.0
Cumulative Scale				
Mean	6.4	0.1	3.3	-2.2
Standard Deviation	3.9	5.8	5.4	4.8

the expected relationship emerges for the gubernatorial primary and is reasonably strong, but no relationship exists at all for the party's Senate primary. In the gubernatorial election, the party suffered a three percentage point decline on the average in its general election vote with each unit increase in divisiveness.

TABLE ONE

Primary Divisiveness and Deviation from Expected Republican Vote

	Democratic Party				Republican Party			
	Gubernatorial Primary		Senate Primary		Gubernatorial Primary		Senate Primary	
	r	b	r	b	r	b	r	b
Primary divisiveness (High score equals high divisiveness)	-.26	-2.54	-.18	-1.33	-.41	-3.05	.01 ^{ns}	.08 ^{ns}

ns = not significant at .05.

How is one to deal with these contradictory patterns? The findings here as well as in other studies support the general, if not satisfactory, conclusion that divisive primaries can harm a candidate's election prospects, but that harm is not the inevitable consequence of a divisive contest. If this is the case, the next step, it seems, is to begin to consider and explore some of the conditions that bear on the relationship between the divisive character of primary elections and general election performance. Some possibilities are suggested in the above analysis. Conceivable, one political party may find it more difficult to overcome divisions among its rank and file than another. One might expect, for example, that the more ideologically diverse a political party, the more difficult it would be to moderate the contentious spirit associated with a hotly contested primary. One would not want to claim, however, and the evidence, one suspects, would not support that the Republican party in Ohio is more ideological than the Democrats.

The out-party, i.e., the party out of office, may also enjoy an advantage. Clem and Meier note that the publicity generated from a divisive primary may add to the visibility of the party's general election candidate, an advantage particularly against an incumbent office-holder. There may also be reasonably strong incentive for the party's rank and file to support the party's nominee, in spite of divisive primary, if the party has been out of office for some time. While there were no incumbents running for re-election in either the gubernatorial or Senate

primaries in Ohio, the Republican Party controlled both the governorship and the Senate seat and had done so for several years. Findings here are consistent with an out-party advantage.

Another factor is the nature of the primary itself and the nominee's response to it. One can imagine closely contested primaries that are not antagonistic. The appeals of the contestants may be directed outward toward the opposition party rather than toward their fellow partisans. Again, one might expect this if the opposition is incumbent. This may have been the case in the Democratic primaries in 1970. The nominee's response to the primary can also make a difference. A conciliatory and reaching out may succeed in bringing the party together mitigating problems in the general election.

There is also some evidence to suggest that primary outcomes bear more heavily on gubernatorial than Senate elections. Although one would not want to push the evidence from selected case studies too far, the difference may represent the greater perceived importance of the governorship to the interests of the voters and the party. The costs associated with the loss of one's Senate preference, who would have been one among 100 senators, may be considered less than the costs associated with the loss of one's choice as the state's chief executive.

There is also the possibility that local circumstances will intervene. For example, in Ohio prior to the primary elections Governor Rhodes, who lost the Republican Party's Senate nomination to Robert Taft, and State Auditor Roger Cloud, who won the party's gubernatorial nomination, were implicated in what became known as the state house loan scandal. It involved a series of poor and questionable investments of state monies to persons close to and involved with the Republican Party, particularly Rhodes. This, no doubt, contributed to Rhodes' defeat in the primary and perhaps to Cloud's defeat in the general election and may explain the strong relationship observed in Table One. If this is true, it means that Cloud received his biggest primary challenge in those counties where the voters were most disturbed by the party's involvement in the scandal, and willing to vote Democratic in November because of it, a distinct possibility.

There is also the role of the party organization. It may not be a divisive primary per se that undermines a party's or candidate's election prospects, but the failure of the party organization to rally around its nominee and work for his/her election. Primary contests have the potential to divide the party organization as well as the rank and file. It may be that these divisions are responsible for either losing or doing

less than expected in the general election. The party organization is, for example, responsible for campaigning and working for the election of its nominees. It can be a major instrument for activating supporters and stimulating them to participate.¹⁸ If the organization fails in this, the party vote may suffer. A highly divisive primary at the electoral level may have little consequence for the general election if the party organization can unite.

The data in Table Two bear on this issue. It reveals the relationship between several dimensions of primary support on the part of the county party chairmen and deviations from the expected Republican vote. The loss of one's preferred candidate in the primary appears to have had little effect on the general election vote. All correlations are quite low and, with the exception of the Democratic gubernatorial primary, statistically insignificant. While little should be made of such low correlations even when they are statistically significant, the modest negative relationship for the Democratic gubernatorial primary may point to problems Gilligan, a liberal candidate, had with a number of conservative party leaders. It may be that Gilligan, the overwhelming favorite of party leaders, did better than expected in the general election in counties where he was the preferred primary nominee of the county chairman. In any case, the general conclusion is that divisions among party leaders over the party's nominee revealed in the preferences and activities of the leadership seem to be unrelated or only modestly so to the general election vote. This may not be unexpected. As suggested earlier, expectations associated with involvement in the regular party may limit the influence of the regular organization on the vote. A professional orientation may characterize party leaders which limits the impact of candidate and/or ideological divisions. In other words, party leaders are expected to perform in a way that contributes to the electoral success of the party regardless of their personal inclinations. One would not, however, expect this of personal campaign organizations.

¹⁸ See for example William J. Crotty, "Party Effort and Its Impact on the Vote," *American Political Science Review*, 65 (June, 1971), 439-450, and the literature cited therein.

TABLE TWO

*Support for Primary Election Winner and Deviation from
Expected Republican Vote*

	<i>Democratic Party</i>		<i>Republican Party</i>	
	<i>Gubernatorial Primary</i>	<i>Senate Primary</i>	<i>Gubernatorial Primary</i>	<i>Senate Primary</i>
Preferred Primary Winner	-.19*	.08 ^{ns}	.09 ^{ns}	.02 ^{ns}
Endorsed Primary Winner	-.13 ^{ns}	.13 ^{ns}	.02 ^{ns}	.06 ^{ns}
Worked for Primary Winner	-.10 ^{ns}	.09 ^{ns}	.12 ^{ns}	.00 ^{ns}
Cumulative Support Scale	-.17	.10 ^{ns}	.06 ^{ns}	.03 ^{ns}

* Denotes Pearson product moment correlation.

^{ns} = not significant at .05.

Conclusion

Conventional wisdom and popular lore suggest that primary elections that divide a political party undermine the party's chances of of success in the general election. There are two components of this thesis that can be examined. One maintains that the rank and file of a party who support a loser in a hard fought primary will withhold their support for the party's nominee in the general election or defect and support the opposition. The other treats the party organization, activists and leaders, as an instrument for mobilizing the vote and maintains that organizations active and supportive of a loser in a "hotly" contested primary will be less active in the general election on behalf of the party's nominee. Less effort and activity means a lower vote for the party in the general election.

The evidence from the primary elections in Ohio in 1970, although limited—it is drawn from a single state and single point in time—cannot dispute the first. Clearly, the general election vote for the Republican gubernatorial candidate in 1970 was lower than expected in counties where his primary vote was lower and higher in counties where his primary vote was higher. However, the opposite was true for both the Democratic gubernatorial and Senate candidates and the vote for the Republican Senate candidate was unaffected by the primary outcome. The answer to the question "Does a divisive primary hurt a candidate's election chances?" appears to be an unsatisfactory but perhaps realistic, it depends.

With respect to the 1970 elections, the Democrats were the out-party and the Republicans were attempting to overcome a charge of corruption leveled at their outgoing Governor. As a result, the primary

campaign in the Democratic Party, particularly for the governorship, focused on the Governor, his and his party's shortcomings, rather than the other Democratic candidates. The Democratic gubernatorial primary was, as such, somewhat consensual serving to unite rather than divide. Just the opposite was true for the Republicans. Thus, being the out-party, challenging an unpopular incumbent administration, and directing the primary campaign at the opposition may be factors that lessen the effects of divisive primaries.

As for division among party leaders, this appears to have little or no influence on the vote. Whether a party chairman supported, endorsed, or worked for a winner or loser in the primary made no difference in the general election vote for the party. While this can mean a number of things, it seems that all county chairmen were reasonably active, performing a number of routine campaign activities on behalf of the party's candidate. Thus, support for a losing primary candidate did not have any electoral consequences. Whatever threat divisive primaries pose to election success, it appears that it operates through the party's rank and file rather than the party leadership.